

A BOND OF LOVE

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Illustrations
Parth Sengupta

Translation
Anupa lal

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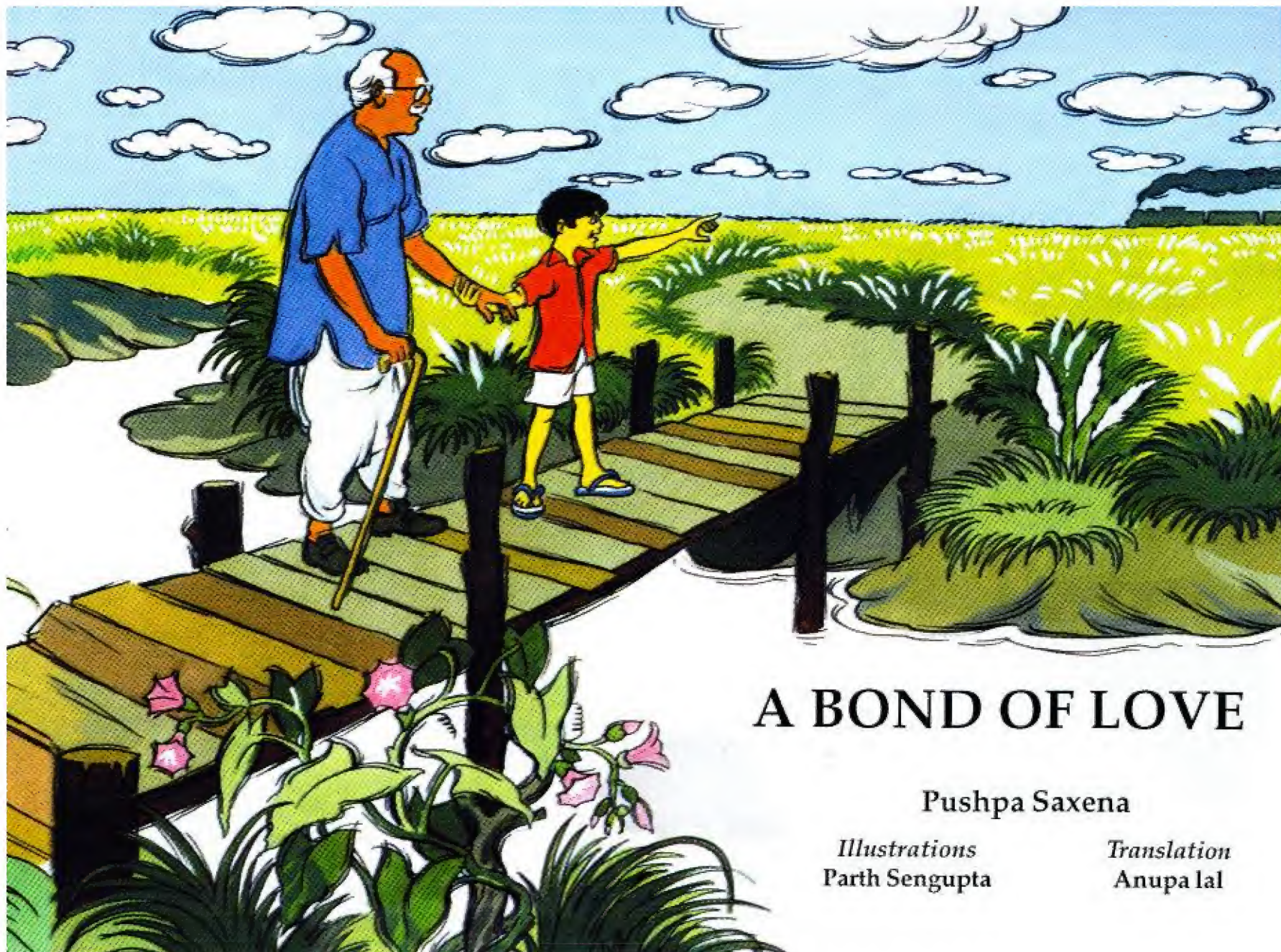
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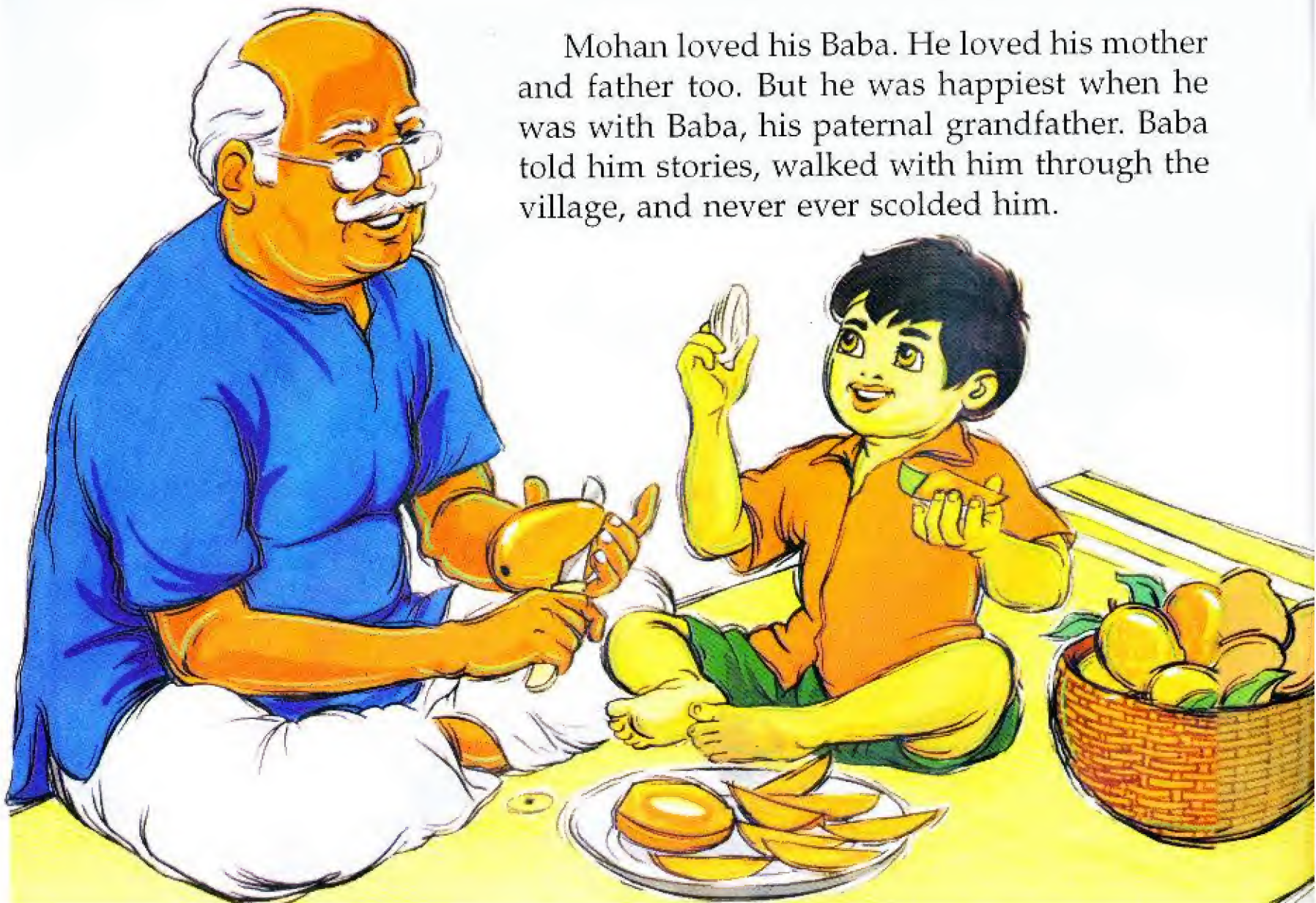
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Mohan loved his Baba. He loved his mother and father too. But he was happiest when he was with Baba, his paternal grandfather. Baba told him stories, walked with him through the village, and never ever scolded him.



One day Baba got a basketful of mangoes for Mohan. Mohan was thrilled! Baba washed the mangoes and then both of them relished the sweet fruit.

"Baba," said Mohan, "I wish we had a mango tree in our garden. Then we could pluck and eat the mangoes whenever we wanted."

"Yes we could," said his grandfather. "But do you know that a mango tree gives us many other things too?"

"Like what, Baba?" asked Mohan.

"My child, as the tree grows it gives us shade. We use its leaves to make garlands for festive occasions."

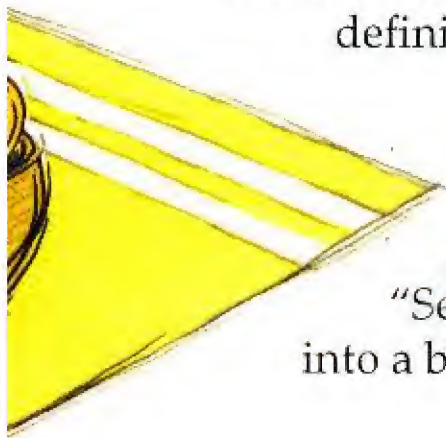
Mohan nodded eagerly. "I saw these garlands at Ramu Bhaiyya's wedding," he said. "And there were mango leaves around the water pots too!"

"And what about the peepani, the flute you make from the seed of the mango? You love playing that flute, don't you?" Baba teased Mohan.

Mohan smiled. "Baba, a mango tree is very useful, isn't it? We should definitely have one in our garden."

"You are right Mohan," said his grandfather. "The first thing I'll do tomorrow is to get you a mango plant."

Early next morning Baba went out of the house to get a mango sapling. "Mohan!" he called as soon as he returned, "See what I've brought for you! When this mango sapling grows into a big tree, parrots and koels and mynahs will sit on its branches."



"What fun!" Mohan said happily. "How merrily the koel sings!"

"Most birds nest on trees," said Baba. "Trees are good friends both of birds and people."

Mohan was puzzled. "But trees can't talk," he said. "Baba, how can they be our friends?"

"Because they help us, my child, like friends do, even if they can't talk to us."

Mohan looked even more puzzled. "I'll explain," said his Baba. "Listen carefully. Trees take in a poisonous gas named carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and in exchange give us clean air or oxygen. If there were no oxygen in the air, we would not be able to breathe! Mohan, we would not be able to live!"

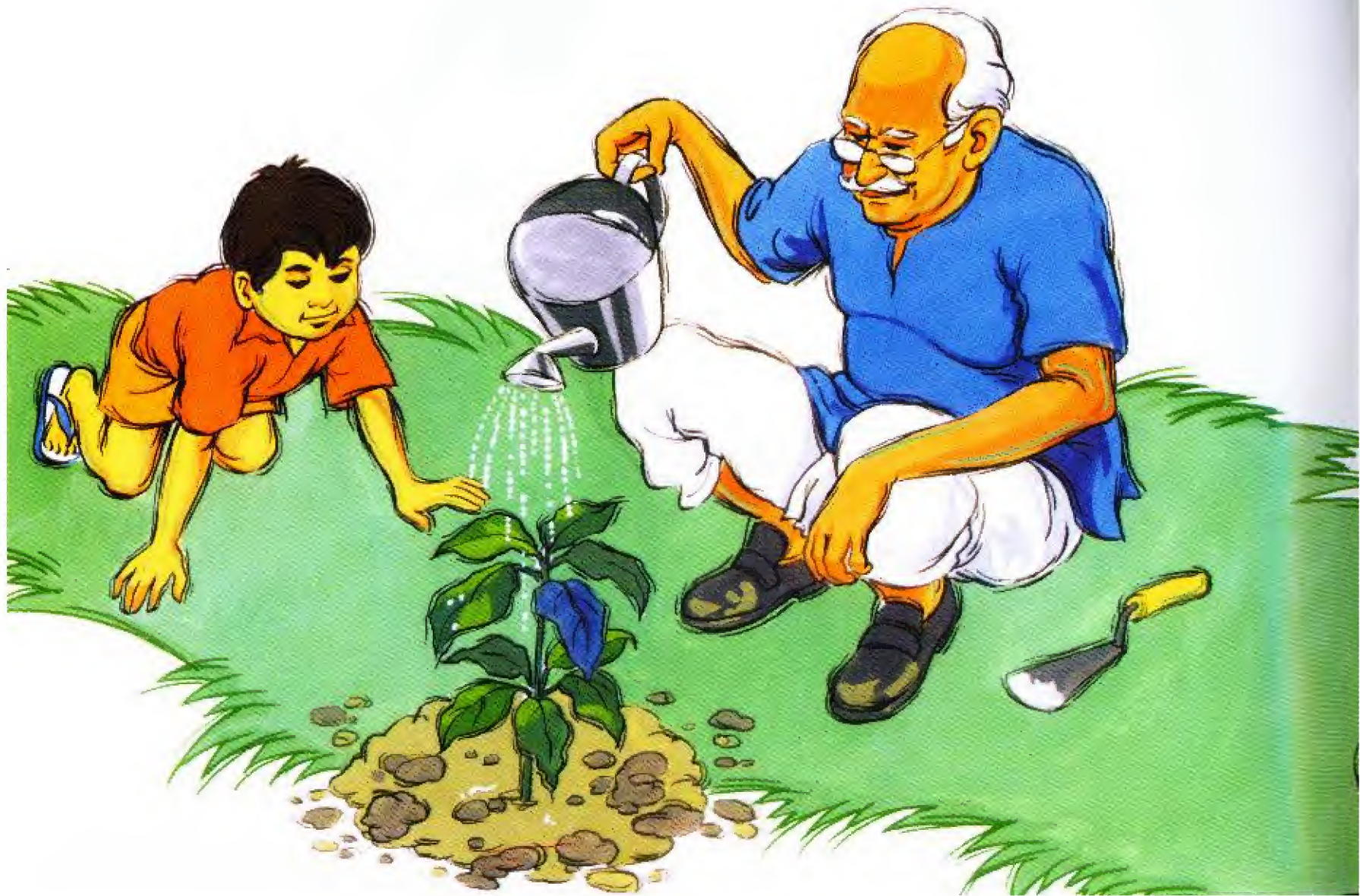
"Oh! Trees are really good to us!" exclaimed Mohan. "But Baba, then why do people cut them down?"

"Because such people are greedy. They want to sell the wood and make money. They don't realise that trees keep the air clean and fit for us to breathe."

"I understand, Baba," said Mohan thoughtfully. "Trees are our best friends."

Baba placed the mango sapling carefully in the soil in a corner of the garden. Then he watered the plant a little and said, "Mohan, now you have your own mango tree!"





"Baba, I'll water it every day," Mohan assured him. "And when there are mangoes on it, then you and I will eat as many mangoes as we want!"

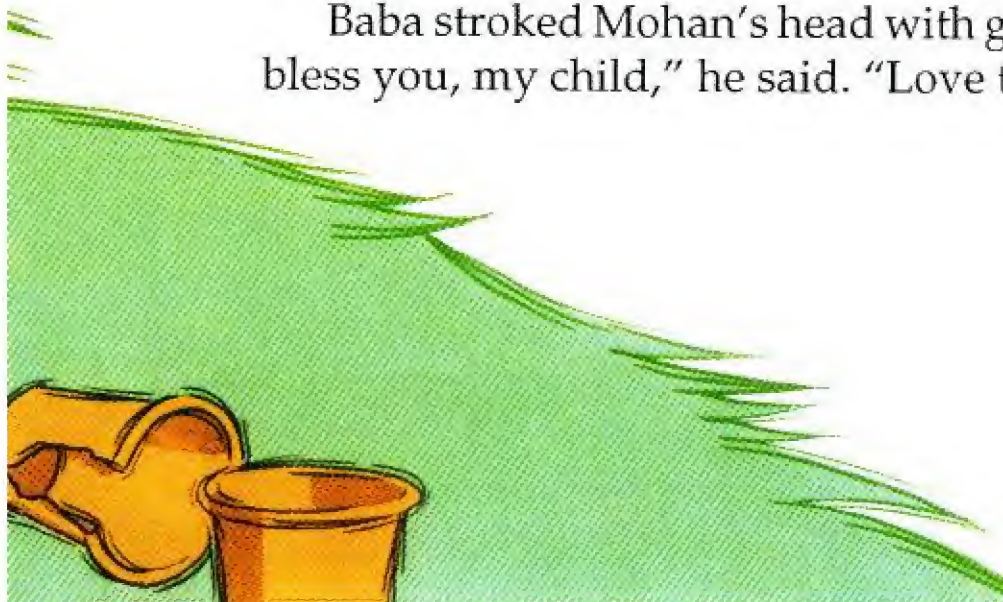
"My child," said his grandfather with a smile, "your Baba may not be able to, but you will surely eat many delicious mangoes from your tree."

"But Baba, why won't you eat the mangoes?" enquired Mohan.

"Because your Baba is already an old man!" his grandfather laughed. "But you will surely enjoy my gift to you for many years."

"No Baba, you have to eat the mangoes too," Mohan insisted. "We will eat them together."

Baba stroked Mohan's head with great affection. "May God always bless you, my child," he said. "Love this tree as you love your Baba."

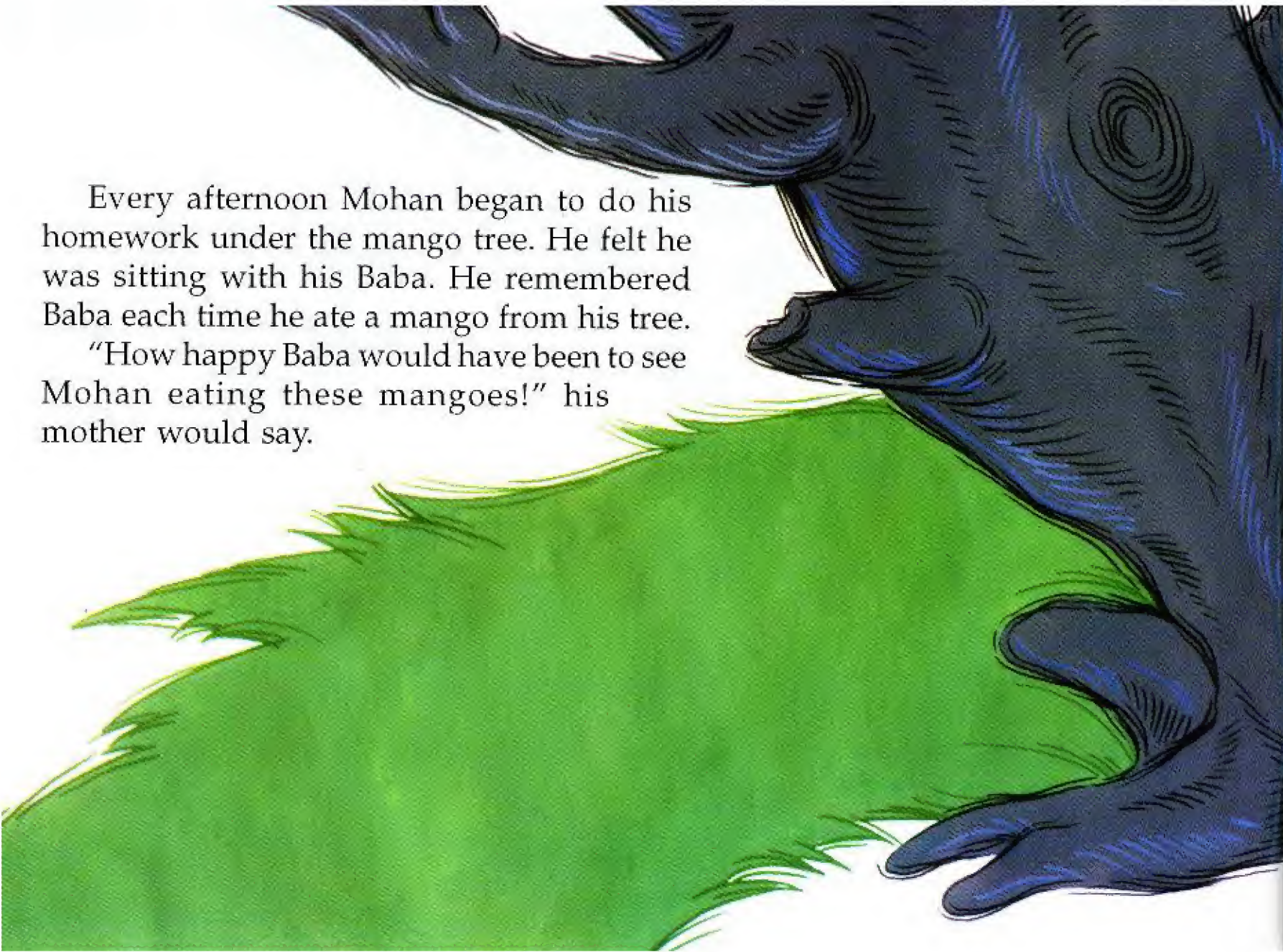






Time passed. Every day Mohan watered the mango plant. Slowly it grew into a tree with shiny green leaves and then yellow-white blossoms. "Kuhu! Kuhu!" sang the koel as it perched on the branches of the tree. Other birds too made the tree their home.

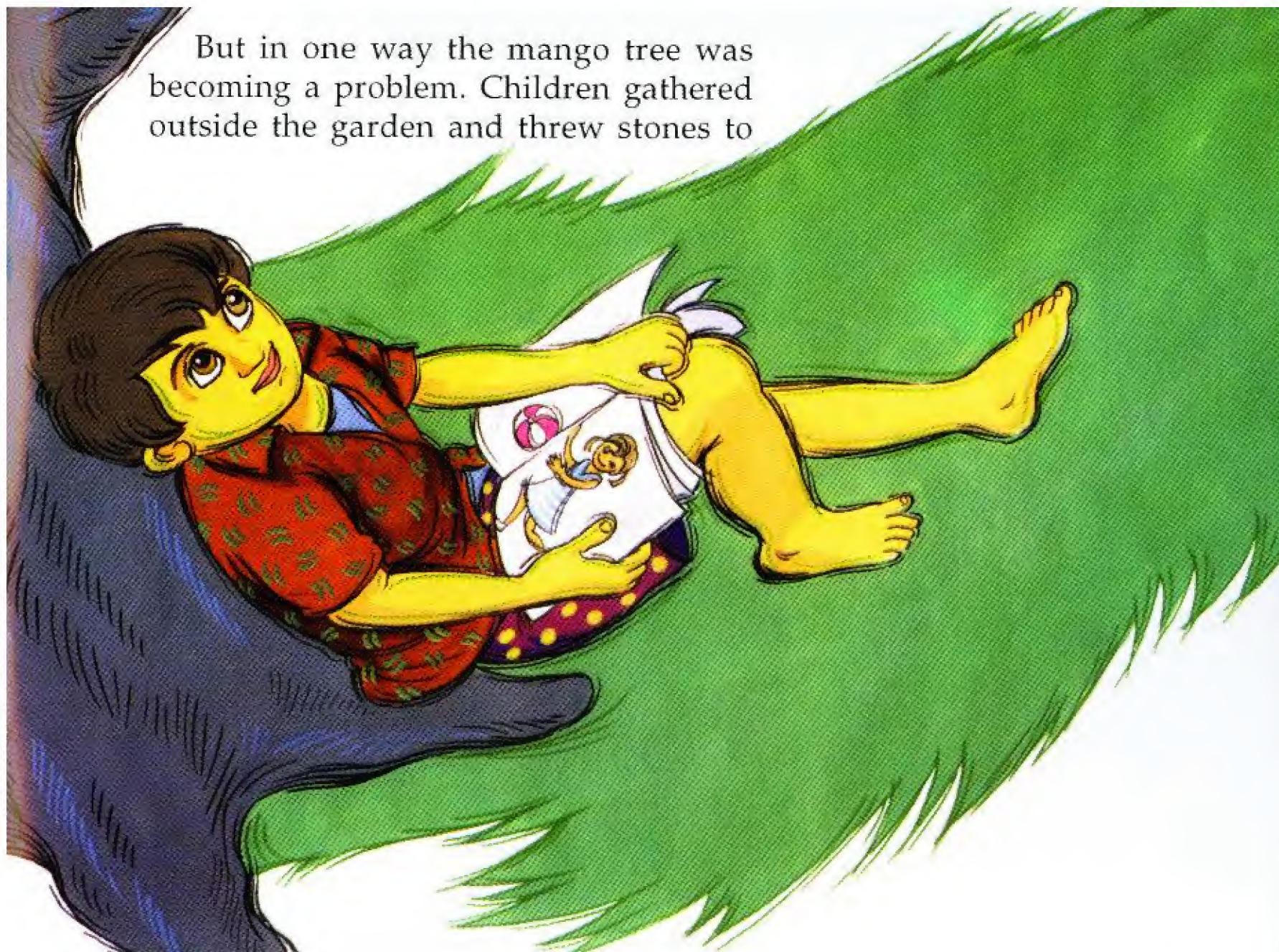
Mohan was very happy. But then, one day, God took his beloved Baba away. Mohan wept bitterly. He really missed his grandfather. Then he remembered Baba's words: "Love the trees as you love me."

An illustration of a tree trunk on the right side of the page, rendered in dark brown with visible wood grain and bark texture. A large, vibrant green leafy branch extends from the trunk towards the bottom left corner. The background is a plain, light cream color.

Every afternoon Mohan began to do his homework under the mango tree. He felt he was sitting with his Baba. He remembered Baba each time he ate a mango from his tree.

"How happy Baba would have been to see Mohan eating these mangoes!" his mother would say.

But in one way the mango tree was becoming a problem. Children gathered outside the garden and threw stones to





break the mangoes from the tree. One of the stones broke a glass windowpane. A few days later another stone hit Mohan's mother on the forehead.

"This has to stop!" declared Mohan's father. "The mango tree will have to be cut down!"

"Perhaps you are right," agreed Mohan's mother. "We can use the wood for many things in the house."

A few days later, a woodcutter came with an axe to chop down the tree. But Mohan stopped him. "You can't cut down this tree," he said. "My Baba planted it."

"Listen to me, Mohan," said his father. "I'll get you as many mangoes as you want from the market. Because of this tree our window-panes are being broken. You yourself were hit by a stone thrown at the tree. Have you forgotten? The other day your mother was hit on the forehead. How long can this go on?"



But Mohan ran to the tree and put his arms around it. Tears were running down his cheeks. "Papa!" he cried. "This tree loves us like Baba did. Please, please don't have it cut down!"

His father laughed. How could a lifeless tree love them like Baba had done?

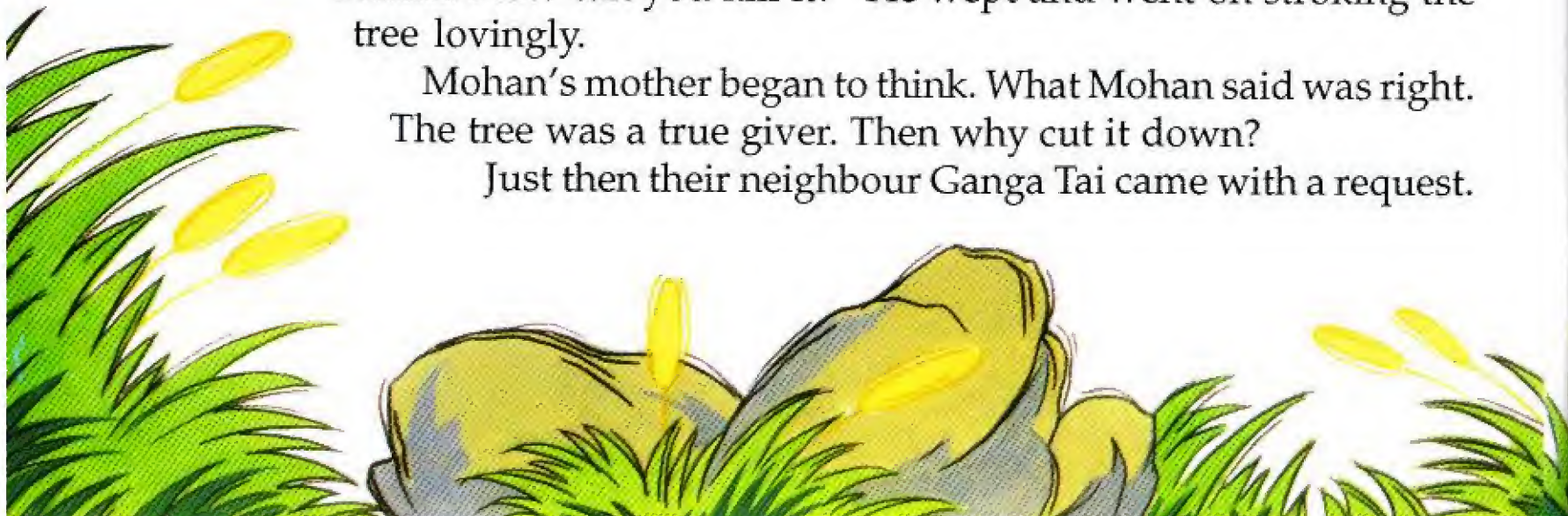
"When its branches move, I feel Baba is stroking my head," said Mohan. "The birds on the tree talk to me like Baba used to."

"Mohan, you are just imagining things," his mother also tried to reason with him. "Move away from the tree."

"No Ma," Mohan said firmly. "This tree is our friend. Baba told me. It removes poisonous gas from the atmosphere and gives us clean air to breathe. It gives us shade and sweet fruit to eat. And it doesn't take anything from us in return. How can you kill it?" He wept and went on stroking the tree lovingly.

Mohan's mother began to think. What Mohan said was right. The tree was a true giver. Then why cut it down?

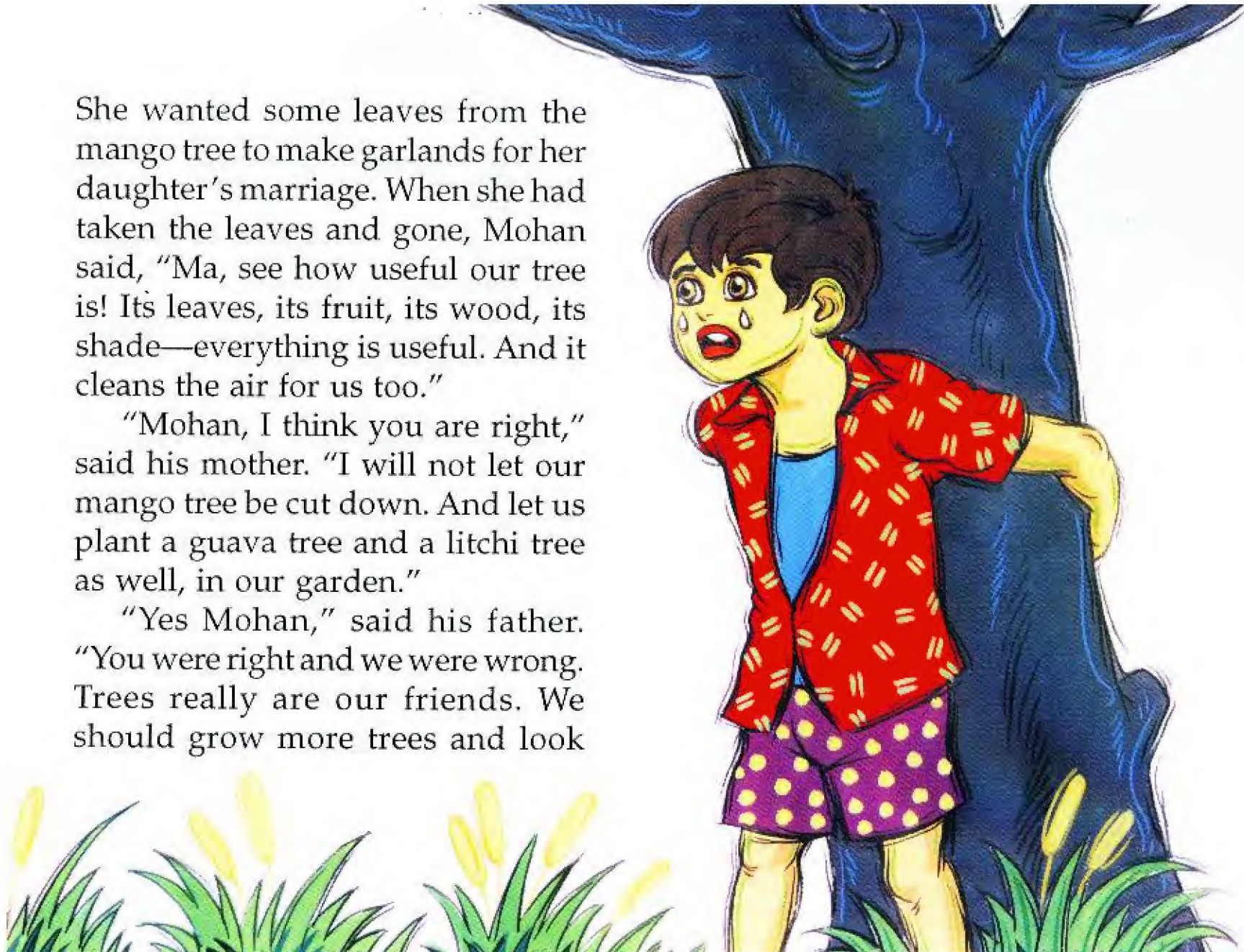
Just then their neighbour Ganga Tai came with a request.



She wanted some leaves from the mango tree to make garlands for her daughter's marriage. When she had taken the leaves and gone, Mohan said, "Ma, see how useful our tree is! Its leaves, its fruit, its wood, its shade—everything is useful. And it cleans the air for us too."

"Mohan, I think you are right," said his mother. "I will not let our mango tree be cut down. And let us plant a guava tree and a litchi tree as well, in our garden."

"Yes Mohan," said his father. "You were right and we were wrong. Trees really are our friends. We should grow more trees and look



after them, not cut them down. I thought our mango tree should be cut only because children were throwing stones at it and hurting your mother and you."

"Papa, if we raise the garden wall, the stones may not come into our garden," suggested Mohan.

"That's a good idea," said his father thoughtfully. "Don't worry Mohan. No one will harm your tree."

Mohan beamed. "Papa, my geography books say trees also help to bring rain and stop floods."

"Your book is right, my son," said his father. "Trees do so much for us. We should be grateful and care for them in return."

"This tree is my Baba now," said Mohan. He ran to his parents and hugged them both.

"It was your Baba's gift to you, Mohan," his mother said gently. "Baba's love for you lives on this tree."

Happily Mohan ran off to play. "Kuhu! Kuhu!" sang the koel sweetly from Mohan's mango tree.



